DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 047 064 UD 011 246

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TITLE A Three Year Summary of Hartford Project Concern (a Program of Urban-Suburban Cooperation).
INSTITUTION Connecticut State Dept. of Education, Hartford. Bureau of Compensatory and Community Educational Services.
PUB DATE Oct 70
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Achievement Gains, Compensatory Education Programs, Educationally Disadvantaged, *Elementary School Students, *Inner City, Integration Effects, Program Evaluation, Reading Achievement, Reading Improvement, Secondary School Students, Social Development, *Student Placement, Suburban Schools
IDENTIFIERS Connecticut, *Project Concern

ABSTRACT

This report is intended to provide new evidence dealing with the effectiveness of this educational program and should be used with data secured from other evaluation efforts. The study was not designed to demonstrate clear "cause and effect" relationships, is limited in its scope, and is not intended to be exhaustive in analyzing all factors operating in the project. The evidence from the study is considered to indicate the following: (1) Project Concern is bringing the children close to the reading levels of the overall population as this factor is measured by standardized test results; (2) Project Concern is most effective for children at the kindergarten and first grade level before reading deficits have occurred; (3) Project Concern children in the early grades who have not experienced the isolated education of inner city schools are approximately at grade level or above in reading; (4) Project Concern reading success is related to the number of years children are in the project--there is a positive relationship between the number of years in the project and the reduction of reading deficits of the group; and, (5) Project Concern children achieve more in reading than similar children remaining in the validated schools of Hartford. (Author/JM)

ED 047064

A THREE YEAR SUMMARY

OF

HARTFORD PROJECT CONCERN

(A PROGRAM OF URBAN-SUBURBAN COOPERATION)

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UD011246

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October 1970

A THREE YEAR SUMMARY
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(A Program of Urban-Suburban Cooperation)

Introduction

Now in its fourth year of operation, Project Concern is no longer considered to be an experiment in the Hartford area but rather an operating educational program in participating school systems. Although the evidence is clear that the children participating in the Hartford Project Concern as well as those in the New Haven area are making significant educational gains, it is important to carry on a continuous evaluation of the program so that new insights into the process be gained. With this thought in mind, the Connecticut State Department of Education completed this three-year summary evaluation of Project Concern recognizing a limited objective and wishing only to add to the knowledge already secured from previous studies of the program.

Study Objectives

Aware of the importance of reading gains in the evaluation of any educational program, it was decided to concentrate on this area of the program and provide as thorough analysis as possible of this specific component of school achievement. This concentration on reading gains should in no way detract from the important social benefits derived by Project Concern pupils. These social benefits were thoroughly measured during the experimental phase of the project and were reported in a document entitled, "A Report on The Effectiveness of Suburban School Placement For Inner-City Youth", prepared by Dr. Thomas Mahan in 1968. Therefore, the specific objective of this study was to determine the relationship of reading levels of Project Concern children with their grade placements in suburban schools.

This objective or problem attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What was the reading achievement of Project Concern children as measured by standardized tests when compared to the normal reading expectancy of all children measured by these instruments?

2. What was the effect of early or late grade placement on the reading achievement of Project Concern children as measured by standardized tests?

3. What effect did the number of participating years have on the reading achievement of Project Concern children as measured by standardized test results?

4. What was the relationships of the reading achievement of Project Concern children as measured by standardized test results with the achievement of similar children in the validated schools which formerly enrolled these Project Concern children?

Limitations of the Study

Using a random procedure in selecting Project Concern children and analyzing the children participating in Project Concern, there is no question that the children are representative of the student bodies of the schools from which they come. Therefore, a control group was not deemed to be necessary and the relationships of this study are drawn on two bases: 1) relationship to standardized test norms and 2) relationship to the student bodies of the validated or low-income schools in Hartford.

Of the target population of 752 Project Concern children attending public and non-public schools in suburban school districts outside the city of Hartford, it was found that 406 children had no useable test results. This situation occurred because of one of the following reasons:

1. Too short a time in the Project town	182
2. The communities did no testing in the primary grades	185
3. Students absent during test administration	12
4. Administration of partial tests	10
5. Considered to be unable to take test and provide valid scores	17
	406

Current year results of standardized reading achievement tests were found for 346 children. The following is a breakdown of the standardized tests used in the participating suburban school districts and provided the test scores for this study:

Iowa Test Basic Skills	178 children
Wide Range Achievement Test	27 children
Metropolitan Achievement Test	70 children
Stanford Achievement Test	25 children
Science Research Associates Achievement	23 children
Gates MacGinitie	23 children
Grade 1 through 8 total	346

In view of the test scores available, it was decided to limit the analysis of reading scores in this evaluation to Grades one through five. Little test information was available for kindergarten children and of the total, only fifty-six (56) Project Concern children in grades six, seven, and eight had suitable test results. Therefore, this analysis is limited to the test results achieved by two hundred ninety (290) Project Concern children in grades one through five. This represents 48 percent of the Project Concern children enrolled in these grades.

Methodology

Restricting the analysis to grades one through five, the grade placement score was used in all cases as an element which all six tests had in common. This represents the average achievement of children of a designated chronological age in the national norm sample. Each year or unit of the grade placement scale is subdivided into decimal parts corresponding to ten months of the normal school year. A grade placement score of 5.2 indicates it is the average achievement of students in the month of November in the fifth grade. A score of 4.0 represents the average achievement of a child in the fourth grade in the month of September.

A reading grade placement score was calculated for each child using the difference in grade placement level for the class and the child's most recent reading achievement test administered as a part of the town's testing program. No special testing was done as a part of this review. Only results obtained from town testing programs were used in which Project Concern children were tested at the same time and under the same conditions as suburban children.

Chart A presents test information on 290 children with the following grade distributions and groups them by grade and the number of year's participation in Project Concern.

Grade One - 42	Grade Three - 56	Grade Five - 61
Grade Two - 71	Grade Four - 60	

CHART A

READING GRADE PLACEMENT LEVELS OF 290 PROJECT CONCERN CHILDREN IN SUBURBAN TOWNS

ONE, TWO, OR THREE YEARS

PRESENT GRADE	YEARS IN PROJECT	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	SUM OF DIFFERENCE IN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORE		MEAN DIFFERENCE IN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORE	END OF YEAR MEAN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORE
One	One	36	+ 5.5		+ .15	2.15
	Two	3	- .2		- .07	1.93
	Three	3	+ 1.0		+ .33	2.33
	Totals:	42	+ 6.3	Means:	+ .15	2.15
Two	One	38	-19.2		- .5	2.5
	Two	16	- 4.8		- .3	2.7
	Three	17	- 1.1		- .06	2.94
	Totals:	71	-25.1	Means:	- .35	2.65
Three	One	29	-20.1		- .69	3.31
	Two	10	- 3.9		- .39	3.61
	Three	17	- 6.1		- .36	3.64
	Totals:	56	-30.1	Means:	- .53	3.47
Four	One	40	-44.1		-1.1	3.9
	Two	4	- 8.0		-2.0	3.0
	Three	16	-15.5		- .97	4.03
	Totals:	60	-67.6	Means:	-1.12	3.88
Five	One	28	-41.9		-1.5	4.5
	Two	10	-10.1		-1.0	5.0
	Three	23	-12.9		- .55	5.45
	Totals:	61	-64.9	Means:	-1.04	4.96

CHART A-1

READING GRADE PLACEMENT LEVELS BY GRADES

PRESENT GRADE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	SUM OF DIFFERENCE IN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORE	MEAN DIFFERENCE IN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORE - END OF YEAR
One	42	+ 6.3	+ .15
Two	71	-25.1	- .35
Three	56	-30.1	- .53
Four	60	-67.6	-1.12
Five	61	-64.9	-1.04

Project Concern children in grade one are one and one half months ahead of grade level; grade two children are three and one half months below grade level; grade three children are five and one third months below grade level; grade four children are one year and one month below grade level; and grade five children are one year below grade level. It should be noted that each grade includes children in the Project from one through three years with the majority in their first year in the suburban community.

These results indicate that as a group, Project Concern children score higher in reading level than Hartford inner city children up through the fifth grade. The most recent reading achievement test information on Hartford inner city children in the fourth grade indicates they are as a group, one year and two months below grade (1.23). They also indicate the earlier a child starts in the Project and the longer he remains in the program, the closer he will come to the grade mean. They also show that the higher the grade a Project Concern child enters the suburban school, the further below grade level he will be in reading.

CHART A-2

MEAN DIFFERENCE IN GRADE PLACEMENT SCORES BY YEARS IN THE PROJECT

YEARS IN PROJECT		GRADE ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR	FIVE	TOTALS	MEAN DIFF.
One	Number	36	38	29	40	28	171	
	Sum of Difference	+5.5	-19.2	-20.1	-44.1	-41.9	-119.8	
	Mean Difference	+.15	- .5	- .69	- 1.1	- 1.5		-.70
Two	Number	3	16	10	4	10	43	
	Sum of Difference	- .2	-4.8	-3.9	-8.0	-10.1	-27.0	
	Mean Difference	- .07	- .3	- .39	-2.0	-1.0		-.63
Three	Number	3	17	17	16	23	76	
	Sum of Difference	+1.0	-1.1	-6.1	-15.5	-12.9	-34.6	
	Mean Difference	+ .33	- .06	- .36	- .97	- .55		-.45

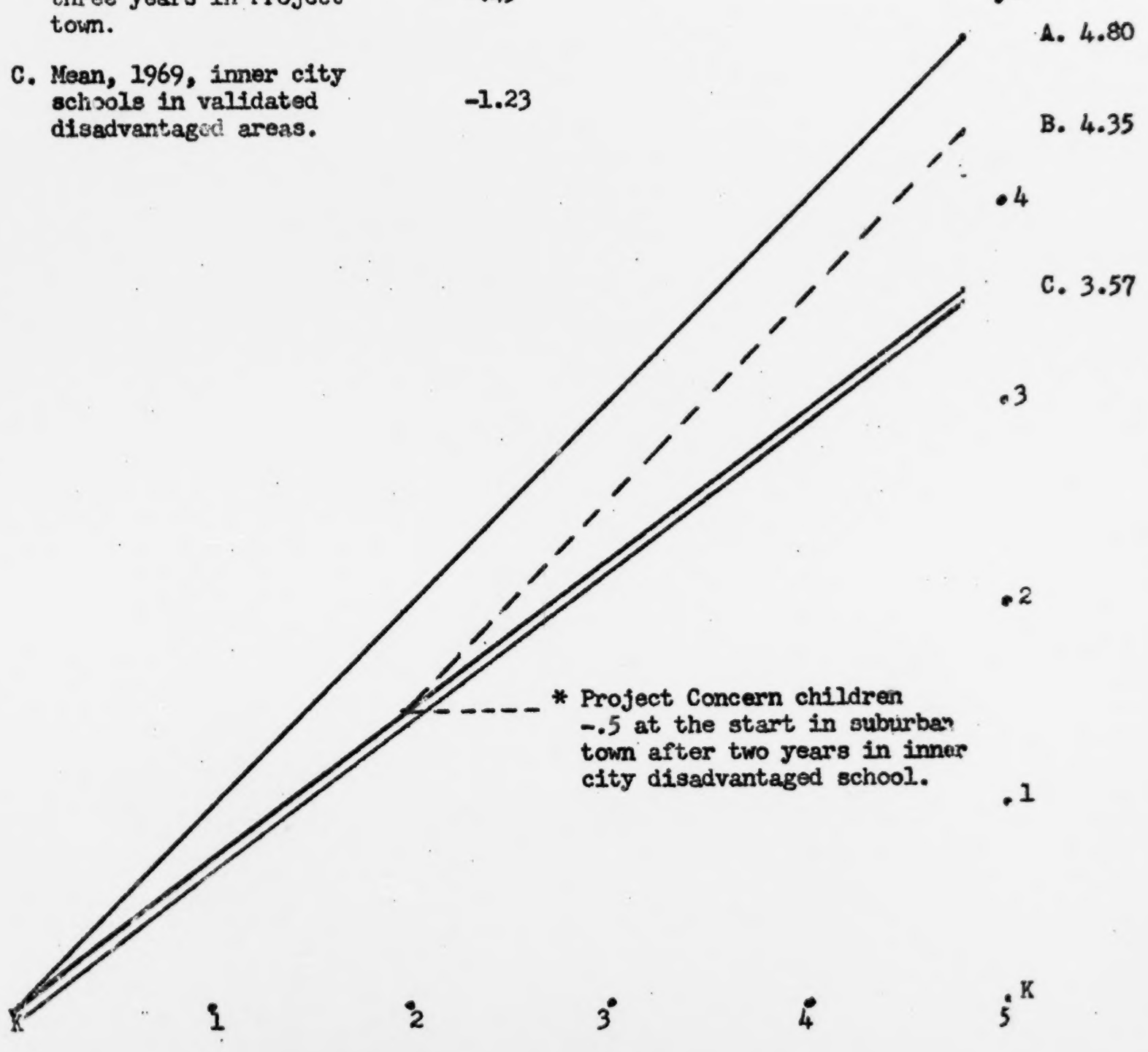
Project Concern children, one year in the program in grades one through five are seven months below grade on the average; those children two years in the program are a little over six months below grade on the average and those children in the program three years in grades one through five are four and one half months below grade.

CHART B

A COMPARISON OF GRADE FOUR SCORES

(By Grade Equivalents)

POPULATION	POSITION
A. Mean population grade level placement.	0
B. Mean, Concern children three years in Project town.	-.45
C. Mean, 1969, inner city schools in validated disadvantaged areas.	-1.23



Conclusions and Recommendations

It seems important at this point of the report to repeat that the study was accomplished to secure evidence related to Project Concern and not to fulfill the requirements of a research design showing clear "cause and effect" relationships which were provided when the project was in its experimental stage. (See "A Report on the Effectiveness of Suburban School Placement for Inner-City Youth" published in 1968). Further, the study is limited in its scope and is not intended to be exhaustive in analyzing all factors operating in the project. This report is intended to provide new evidence dealing with the effectiveness of this educational program and should be used in concert with data secured from other evaluation efforts.

The evidence secured from this study seems to indicate the following:

1. Project Concern is bringing the children close to the reading levels of the overall population as this factor is measured by standardized test results. For children at the earliest grade levels, they are as a group at grade level or above. Further, the reading deficits of enrolling children are being reduced by the project. (Information provided by Chart B shows that Project Concern children in the fourth grade read a year ahead of their counterparts in validated inner-city schools. This same chart shows that by the fourth grade, Project Concern children, are as a group within a half a year of reading at grade level.)

2. Project Concern is most effective for children at the kindergarten and first grade level before reading deficits have occurred.(Chart A shows that Project Concern children in the early grades who have not experienced the isolated education of inner-city schools are approximately at grade level in reading or above.)

3. Project Concern reading success is related to the number of years children are in the project. There is a positive relationship between the number of years in the project and the reduction of reading deficits of the group.(An analysis of reading deficits See Chart A , when they are related to the number of years children participate in Project Concern indicate a constant pattern of growth toward reading at grade level as they accumulate more years of participation in this inter-community effort. With the exception of two instances with small numbers of children involved, Chart A shows that at each grade level reading achievement improves in relation to seniority of the children in the project.)

4. Project Concern children achieve more in reading than similar children remaining in the validated schools of Hartford. (See Chart B and Conclusion #1, above).

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